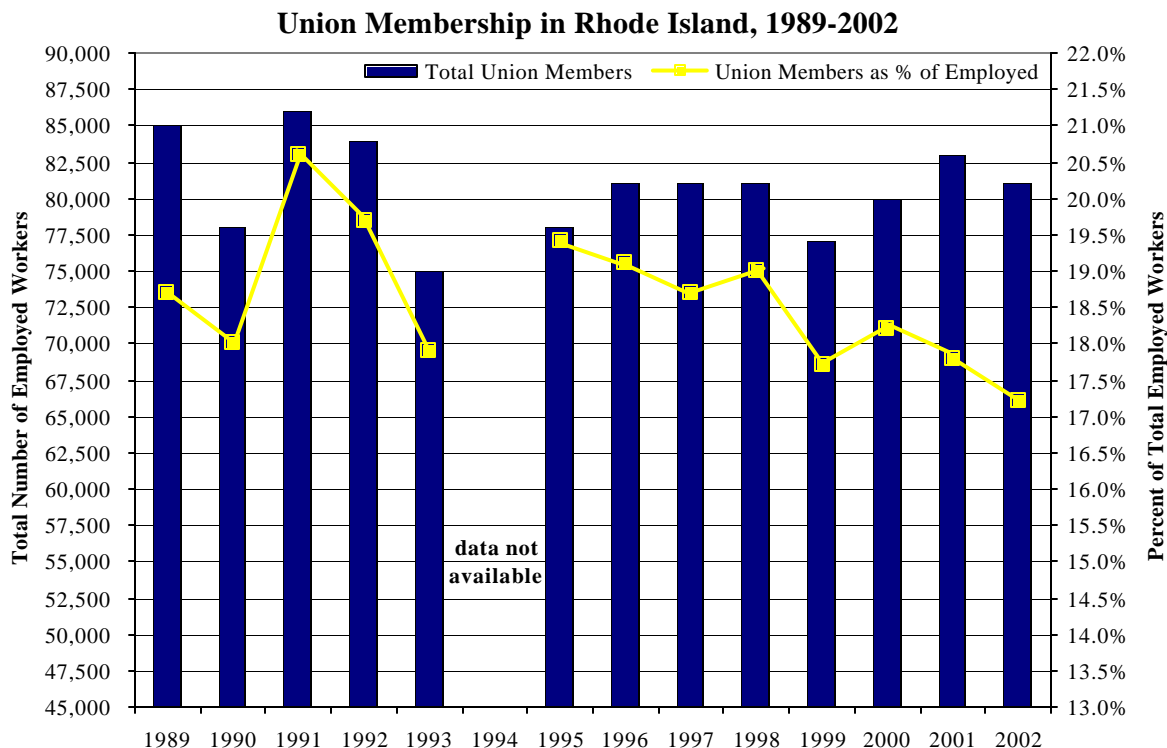


Union Membership in Rhode Island

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the percentage of unionized wage and salary employees in Rhode Island has fallen 1.5 percentage points since 1989. In 2002, the Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS) estimates that 17.2 (81,000) percent of Ocean State workers were union members, compared to 18.7 (85,000) percent thirteen years earlier. This decline has occurred despite a 3.1 percent increase in the total number of employed workers during this period.

Rhode Island's declining union membership rate is indicative of a nationwide trend. In 1989, 16.4 (17.0 million) percent of employed workers were unionized. By 2002, this level had fallen to 13.2 (16.1 million) percent, a 3.2 percentage point loss. Within New England, each of the region's six states also reported significant declines in unionization. In 1989, both Connecticut (18.5%) and Massachusetts (17.5%) reported membership rates higher than the national average, followed by Maine (15.2%), Vermont (11.9%), and New Hampshire (11.6%). Since that time, each of these states have reported union membership rate declines in excess of Rhode Island's 1.5 percentage point loss. In 2002, 14.2 percent of Massachusetts workers were unionized, representing a 3.3 percentage point decline. Vermont's rate fell 2.4 percentage points to 9.5 percent during this period, with Maine (-2.3 percentage points) reporting a similar decline to 12.9 percent. Both New Hampshire (-1.9 percentage points) and Connecticut (-1.8 percentage points) experienced declines closer to that of the Ocean State as their membership rates fell to 9.7 percent and 16.7 percent, respectively.

Today, Rhode Island's 17.2 percent membership rate makes it the most highly unionized state in the region and tenth highest in the United States, trailing New York (25.3%), Hawaii (24.4%), Alaska (24.3%), Michigan (21.1%), Illinois (19.6%), New Jersey (19.4%), Washington (18.4%), Minnesota (17.6%), and California (17.5%). Regional neighbors, including Connecticut (11th), Massachusetts (17th), Maine (23rd), New Hampshire (27th), and Vermont (28th), were all ranked lower in 2002.



Data included within this report is derived from the Current Population Survey (CPS), a monthly survey of households conducted by the Bureau of Census for the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Statistics are based upon the sole or principal job of full- and part-time workers in the private and government sectors. All self-employed workers are excluded. Union membership data refers to members of a labor union or an employee association similar to a union. Union representation data includes union members as well as workers who report no union affiliation, but whose jobs are covered by a union or an employee association contract. For more information on CPS data, please visit www.bls.gov/cps.